

Message Text

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SUBJECT: SEYMOUR TOPPING ARTICLE ON VORSTER INTERVIEW

1. FOLLOWING IS THE TEXT OF AN ARTICLE BY SEYMOUR TOPPING
ON VORSTER'S INTERVIEW, WHICH APPEARED IN THE NEW YORK
TIMES, SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 17:

2. PRIME MINISTER JOHN VORSTER WARNED THE UNITED STATES TO-
DAY THAT HE WOULD RESIST ITS "BLATANT MEDDLING" IN THE
INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF HIS NATION.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN LEADER, SPEAKING DELIBERATELY AND DEFIANT-
LY IN A BLUNT INTERVIEW, DECLARED THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WAS
BRACING TO WITHSTAND ANY ECONOMIC SANCTIONS OR OIL BOYCOTT
THAT MIGHT BE IMPOSED AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THE DISPUTE OVER
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THE FUTURE OF RHODESIA OR OPPOSITION TO HIS APARTHEID POLICY
OF RACIAL SEGREGATION.

THE PRIME MINISTER WAS INTERVIEWED IN HIS HEAVILY GUARDED
OFFICE IN THE CAPITAL AT A TIME WHEN SOUTH AFRICA WAS
PLUNGED INTO ITS MOST SERIOUS CRISIS SINCE BLOODY BLACK STU-
DENT RIOTS LAST YEAR.

THE VORSTER GOVERNMENT IS CONFRONTED BY AN UPSURGE OF BLACK STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS AND PROTESTS, SUPPORTED BY THE WHITE LIBERAL FACTIONS, AGAINST THE UNEXPLAINED DEATH LAST SUNDAY IN POLICE DETENTION OF STEVEN BIKO, THE MOST POPULAR YOUNG BLACK LEADER IN SOUTH AFRICA.

IN HIS INTERVIEW TODAY, THE PRIME MINISTER MADE HIS FIRST PUBLIC COMMENT ABOUT THE BIKO STORM. HE SAID THE DEATH WAS "VERY UNFORTUNATE," PROMISED AN INQUEST, BUT ADDED THAT THE ROLE OF THE 30-YEAR-OLD BLACK NATIONALIST LEADER HAD BEEN EXAGGERATED.

MR. VORSTER INSISTED THAT HE WOULD NOT - DESPITE AMERICAN PRESSURE - COMPEL PRIME MINISTER IAN D. SMITH OF RHODESIA TO ACCEPT THE BRITISH-AMERICAN PLAN FOR TRANSFER OF POWER TO A BLACK MAJORITY IN THAT EMBATTLED COUNTRY.

DISCUSSING DETAILS OF HIS LAST PRIVATE CONVERSATION IN PRETORIA WITH ANDREW YOUNG, MR. VORSTER SAID HE HAD TOLD THE CHIEF UNITED STATES DELEGATE TO THE UNITED NATIONS:

"IF THEY THINK THAT THEY CAN PRESSURE ME INTO PRESSURING SMITH, THEN THEY HAVE GOT ANOTHER GUESS COMING BECAUSE I WON'T DO IT."

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AN ATMOSPHERE OF SIEGE IN THE COUNTRY HAS ALSO BEEN ENGENDERED BY THE SPEECHES OF MEMBERS OF THE VORSTER CABINET SUGGESTING THAT THE COUNTRY MIGHT HAVE TO GO IT ALONE ECONOMICALLY IN DEFIANCE OF POSSIBLE ECONOMIC SANCTIONS.

WIDE PUBLICITY WAS GIVEN TO WESTERN HINTS THAT ECONOMIC SANCTIONS MIGHT BE IMPOSED IF SOUTH AFRICA FAILED TO BACK THE BRITISH-AMERICAN INITIATIVE IN RHODESIA OR DID NOT YIELD TO PRESSURE FOR REFORMS.

COMMENTING ON UNITED STATES POLICY, MR. VORSTER SAID:

"IT IS FAST REACHING THE STAGE WHERE WE FEEL THAT THE UNITED STATES WANTS TO PRESCRIBE TO US HOW WE SHOULD RUN OUR COUNTRY INTERNALLY AND THAT IS OF COURSE UNACCEPTABLE TO US. IT IS A FOOL WHO DOESN'T LISTEN TO ADVICE BUT NOBODY CAN ALLOW OUTSIDERS, HOWEVER WELL-INTENTIONED, WHATEVER THEIR MOTIVES, TO MEDDLE IN THEIR INTERNAL AFFAIRS."

"I AM DEFINITELY NOT GOING TO LET ANYBODY TELL ME HOW TO DO IT AND TO PRESCRIBE TO ME WHAT I SHOULD DO AND WHAT I SHOULD NOT DO," THE PRIME MINISTER ADDED.

MR. VORSTER RETURNED TO THE ATTACK ON A REMARK MADE BY VICE PRESIDENT MONDALE IN VIENNA LAST MAY AT A NEWS CONFERENCE FOLLOWING A MEETING BETWEEN THE OFFICIALS. THE REMARK WAS TAKEN HERE AS CONFIRMATION THAT THE UNITED STATES FAVORED ONE-MAN, ONE-VOTE ELECTIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA, WHICH WOULD LEAD TO BLACK MAJORITY RULE. MR. MONDALE SAID HE DID NOT SEE ANY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE CONCEPTS OF FULL PARTICIPATION AND ONE-MAN, ONE-VOTE.

"IT'S THE SAME THING," MR. MONDALE REMARKED. "EVERY CITIZEN SHOULD HAVE THE RIGHT TO VOTE, AND EVERY VOTE WOULD BE EQUALLY WEIGHTED."

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WHITE LIBERALS JOIN CRITICISM

WHITE LIBERALS IN OPPOSITION PARTIES HAVE JOINED THE CONSERVATIVES IN MR. VORSTER'S NATIONAL PARTY IN CRITICIZING MR. MONDALE. WHILE GENERALLY FAVORING UNITED STATES PRESSURE FOR CHANGE IN SOUTH AFRICA, THE LIBERALS FEEL THAT THE MONDALE REMARK, BY IMPLYING A RAPID RATHER THAN GRADUAL EVOLUTION, HAD GIVEN THE GOVERNMENT AMMUNITION FOR RALLYING POPULAR SUPPORT IN OPPOSITION TO CHANGE.

DENYING THAT THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION HAD SUBSEQUENTLY SOFTENED THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE MONDALE STATEMENT, MR. VORSTER SAID SHARPLY: "THEY HAVE NEVER REPUDIATED MONDALE." THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT SUCH A POLICY REPRESENTED "BLATANT MEDDLING IN SOUTH AFRICAN AFFAIRS" AND THAT HE DID NOT BELIEVE THE AMERICAN PEOPLE WOULD APPROVE OF THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION'S PRESCRIBING WHAT FORM OF GOVERNMENT THERE SHOULD BE IN SOUTH AFRICA.

FOR THE FIRST TIME, MR. VORSTER REVEALED THAT HIS GOVERNMENT INTENDED TO PURSUE A POLICY OF "FULL ELECTED COMMUNITY COUNCILS GRADUALLY TAKING OVER ALL LOCAL GOVERNMENT; IN THE BLACK TOWNSHIPS SITUATED IN THE TERRITORY OF SOUTH AFRICA NOW RESERVED TO TOTAL WHITE CONTROL.

"IT CAN'T HAPPEN IN A DAY," MR. VORSTER SAID. "YOU MUST START BY HAVING FULLY ELECTED COUNCILS AND THEN BY WAY OF EVOLUTION THESE COUNCILS WILL GROW AND GROW UNTIL EVENTUALLY THEY CAN TAKE OVER THE WHOLE OF CITY ADMINISTRATION. THIS IS THE WAY WE WILL BE GOING."

ASKED IF THIS SIGNIFIED A STEP IN THE DIRECTION OF EVENTUAL PARTICIPATION BY BLACKS IN THE NATIONAL POLITICAL PROCESS,
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THE PRIME MINISTER CURTLY SAID "NO."

MR. VORSTER SAID THAT THE 18.6 MILLION BLACKS WHO MAKE UP MORE THAN 70 PERCENT OF THE COUNTRY'S POPULATION WOULD BE REPRESENTED IN A NATIONAL OR PARLIAMENTARY SENSE ONLY IN THE SEPARATE BLACK "HOMELANDS" THROUGH THEIR STATE GOVERNMENTS.

THIS WOULD EXCLUDE THE 8.5 MILLION BLACKS WHO NOW LIVE IN THE WHITE CONTROLLED AREAS. BLACK NATIONALIST LEADERS HAVE OPPOSED THE HOMELANDS OR SEPARATE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM AND INSISTED ON FULL POLITICAL PARTICIPATION.

MR. VORSTER SAID HE WOULD PRESS FORWARD WITH HIS PROPOSAL FOR CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES THAT WOULD OFFER A SHARE OF NATIONAL POLITICAL POWER - NOW HELD TOTALLY BY THE 4.3 MILLION WHITES - TO THE 2.4 MILLION PEOPLE OF MIXED RACES AND 750,000 INDIANS BUT EXCLUDING BLACKS.

HE SAID THAT HE HAD NOT GIVEN UP HOPE THAT THE PEOPLE OF MIXED RACE OR THE COLOREDS, AS THEY ARE REFERRED TO HERE, WOULD FINALLY ACCEPT THE PROPOSALS ALTHOUGH THE TOP LEADERSHIP OF THE DOMINANT LABOR PARTY HAS ALREADY REJECTED THEM BECAUSE OF THE FAILURE TO INCLUDE BLACKS.

LACK OF MONEY DELAYS IMPROVEMENTS

MR. VORSTER SAID A SHORTAGE OF FUNDS WAS SLOWING THE EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS TOWARD ENHANCED FACILITIES FOR BLACKS IN SUCH MATTERS AS EDUCATION, HOUSING AND MUNICIPAL AMENITIES SUCH AS HOUSEHOLD RUNNING WATER AND ELECTRICITY IN THE TOWNSHIPS.

"THE BLACKS IN SOUTH AFRICA HAVE MADE MORE PROGRESS IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS IN ALL DIRECTIONS THAN IN THE LAST TWO CENTURIES," MR. VORSTER SAID, ADDING:

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"THE STANDARD OF LIVING OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN BLACK IS TWO TO FIVE TIMES HIGHER THAN THAT IN ANY BLACK COUNTRY IN AFRICA. THE RATE OF LITERACY IS TWO TO FIVE TIMES HIGHER."

THE 50-MINUTE INTERVIEW WAS CONDUCTED IN MR. VORSTER'S WOOD

PANELED OFFICE ON THE FIRST FLOOR OF THE UNION BUILDINGS, THE MASSIVE SANDSTONE ADMINISTRATIVE CENTER THAT STANDS ON A HILL OVERLOOKING PRETORIA, A HANDSOME MODERN CAPITAL CITY WITH AN IMPRESSIVE SKYLINE OF HIGH-RISE OFFICE AND APARTMENT TOWERS.

TO ENTER THE PRESIDENTIAL OFFICE, THE VISITORS WERE FIRST PASSED INTO THE LOBBY THROUGH AN ELECTRONICALLY CONTROLLED IRON GATE, INSTALLED LAST JANUARY AFTER OUTBURSTS OF RIOTING AND TERRORISM, AND THEN THROUGH A CUSTOMARILY LOCKED OUTER SECRETARY'S OFFICE BEFORE BEING USHERED BY WAY OF A HEAVILY PADDED DOOR INTO THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE.

MR. VORSTER, A HEAVY SET MAN WHO IS 62 YEARS OLD, DRESSED IN A GRAY SUIT AND A BRIGHTLY PATTERNED TIE WITH A GOLD CLIP THAT CONTRASTED WITH HIS OTHERWISE SOMBER APPEARANCE, SEATED HIMSELF WITH HIS VISITORS IN A CIRCLE OF BEIGE VELVET UPHOLSTERED CHAIRS ARRANGED BEFORE HIS LARGE OAKEN DESK.

THE PRIME MINISTER, FAMOUS FOR HIS BLUNT MANNER, IMPATIENTLY CUT SHORT PLEASANTRIES AND EXTENDED QUESTIONS TO MAKE HIS POINTS DIRECTLY AND EMPHATICALLY, AT TIMES WAVING HIS HORN-RIM GLASSES IN EMPHASIS. HIS TOUGHLY WORDED STATEMENTS WERE UTTERED COOLY, WITHOUT A SMILE. HE PAUSED ONLY

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TWICE TO OFFER CIGARETTES TO HIS VISITORS BEFORE SELECTING ONE HIMSELF.

MR. VORSTER WAS ADAMANT THAT HE WOULD NOT "TWIST THE ARM" OF PRIME MINISTER SMITH TO FORCE ACCEPTANCE OF THE BRITISH-AMERICAN PROPOSAL, WHICH THE RHODESIAN LEADER HAS DENOUNCED BUT NOT FINALLY REJECTED. THE PLAN CALLS FOR A BLACK GOVERNMENT TO BE CHOSEN IN A ONE-MAN, ONE-VOTE ELECTION BY THE END OF 1978.

WASHINGTON AND LONDON HAVE BROUGHT INTENSE PRESSURE, WITH THE IMPLIED THREAT OF POSSIBLE SANCTIONS, ON MR. VORSTER TO BACK THE PLAN BECAUSE SOUTH AFRICA COULD COMPEL THE SMITH WHITE MINORITY REGIME TO YIELD. RHODESIA IS DEPENDENT ON SOUTH AFRICA AS AN AVENUE OF TRADE, SUPPLY AND COMMUNICATIONS. VANCE

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